

BAY DELTA CONSERVATION PLAN FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

Fish Agencies Revision
October 30, 2007

This document presents an overview of the approach for evaluating the means of conveying water over the long term and for identifying key elements of a successful conservation strategy for the Delta. The framework will also describe the process and methods used to arrive at those key elements and the proposed approach. Development of the approach is expected to advance the BDCP's goals and conservation objectives by focusing the efforts of the parties involved on the most effective approach. The Steering Committee will carry the framework forward into the planning processes under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), Natural Communities Conservation Planning Act (NCCPA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The framework will include the following:

1. Description of the Approach. The most attractive option examined to date through the BDCP effort is #4, the isolated facility, as far as having the best opportunities for meeting ESA and NCCPA requirements. We, therefore, support an in-depth evaluation of a long-term water conveyance project and conservation strategy focused on an isolated conveyance structure with diversion(s) of Sacramento River water that maintains the potential for dual conveyance using existing facilities in the south Delta. This evaluation also includes infrastructure and operations modifications with the potential to improve the capability of existing through-Delta water export efforts to contribute to BDCP near-term conservation and water supply goals through improved biological productivity, improved in-Delta and export water quality, reduced fish entrainment, and other means.
2. Development of the Approach.
 - a. Process - The framework will set out the process to be used by the Steering Committee to identify a conveyance option for further evaluation. The framework will also set out the approach for defining biological goals and objectives, refining the covered species list, and describing how conservation strategies for species and natural communities will be developed. Included in the framework will be a recap process leading up to the evaluation of options and identify the steps to be taken by the Steering Committee to reach consensus.
 - b. Information used – The framework will discuss the information, analyses, and assumptions that factored into the selection of an approach, such as new reports, studies, and modeling results as well as the guidance from the independent science advisors.
 - c. Rationale – The framework will detail the rationale supporting the approach. Through the Steering Committee's consideration of the four options, a greater understanding emerged of the opportunities and shortcomings associated with each of the options that were analyzed in the development of the approach.
3. Role of the Framework in the Development of the BDCP.
 - a. What it is – The framework will describe the role of the preferred approach to water conveyance. Additionally, the framework will describe the approach for developing the BDCP's overall conservation plan and specific conservation actions for the Delta.
 - b. What it is not – The framework document will discuss how it and the options evaluation leading up to it are not intended to serve as an analysis of alternatives pursuant to the requirements of state and federal endangered species laws and environmental review processes under NEPA and CEQA. Rather, the purpose of the evaluation and framework is to help inform the Steering Committee as it crafts a proposed approach for the BDCP and begins to develop the plan.
4. Information Needs for the BDCP Planning Process Ahead. The Steering Committee will identify certain informational needs and areas of uncertainty as it develops the approach into a Conservation Plan. The framework will memorialize those needs and uncertainties to ensure that they are addressed in the conservation planning process for the BDCP.
5. Next Steps. The framework will include information on future activities and timelines related to the development of the BDCP, including the environmental review process under NEPA and CEQA.